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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1860.

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OUR WASHINGTON LETTER.

The Great Robbery of the Indian Fund Character of the Present Administration—Its Treason, Perjury and Robbery—Action of the Two Crisis Committees—Firm Stand of the Republicans—South Carolina Envoys and the Japanese.

[From Our Own Correspondent.]

WASHINGTON, Dec. 22, 1860.

The city has been thrown into a storm to-day by the discovery of the robbery of the Indian Trust Fund of nearly *one million dollars*. It came to light last night by the voluntary confession of the ex-Clerk in the case, Mr. Bedford, who has charge of the safe containing the bonds. Thompson, Secretary of the Interior, had just returned from his visit to the State of Illinois, where he had been to see and consult with the Secretary of War, and then proceeded to the office of the Clerk of said Department, Mr. Bedford, and there received the bonds said complainant died his safe on the first day of April last, the 1st day of December, 1860, and at the time specified, public notice was given by the Secretary of the Interior, in the Court House in the City of Illinois, of the sale of said bonds to the highest and best bidder for cash, and interest and equity of redemption, and the sale was made in pursuance of said decree, and in accordance with the terms of said decree, and the said complainant died his safe on the first day of April last, the 1st day of December, 1860, and at the time specified, public notice was given by the Secretary of the Interior, in the Court House in the City of Illinois, of the sale of said bonds to the highest and best bidder for cash

Chicago Tribune.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1860.

FROM FORT MOULTRIE.

A letter from Fort Moultrie, unquestionably written by a soldier now in that fortress, which we print herewith, bids the country hope that that strong-hold will be defended to the last; and that when time for surrender comes, the little garrison there will apply a match to the powder magazine, and leave not one stone upon another. The present danger is that this devoted little band will be removed to make way for men, it they can be found in the American army, who will be more facile tools in the hands of the chief of the traitors—the President of the United States. This danger being removed, we regard the Fort as safe. South Carolina will not, when the hour of trial comes, be able to muster men enough to take it; not that we doubt the courage of that people when in the field; but they are unused to the encounter of the difficulties which stand in the way of storming fortresses that are determinedly defended; and the destruction of the heads of their columns of attack, by well-served guns scattering canister and grape will be the signal for quick and rapid retreat. But the time is close at hand when all theories on this point will be tested. In the meantime, let every man read the letter to which we refer, and restrain his indignation if he can.

FLAX AND COTTON.

The article on the preparation of Flax for the loom, which we print herewith, would at any time be interesting; at this moment, when political troubles have turned the attention of the North toward the imperative necessity for finding out a cheap substitute for cotton, which can be wrought on the cotton spinning and cotton weaving machinery now in use, it is doubly so. The writer undoubtedly means what he says; he is a skilled mechanic who has given ten years to the consideration of the subject of which he writes, and if he is not misled by his hopes has devised a plan upon which hang wonderful and memorable results to the whole civilized world. We believe that he is not wrong in his fundamental idea, that in the civilization of mankind the time has come for the appearance of some textile substance which will make all nations independent of that cotton plant upon which such vital interests now hang. If he has not found that which he has sought and won for himself a name as honorable as that of Arkwright or Whitney, he is opening the way to others; and we may be sure that as soon as necessity pinches, the grand discovery will be made. In their ordinary blind way men content themselves with things as they are, and are greatly inclined to believe that the heights have been attained, and that invention and discovery are at an end. But Nature is wiser, and knows no limitations of her resources or of the capacity of the human intellect. Those who have studied her mysterious ways believe that the great designs of Providence for the enobling of human kind are not bounded on any side by a cotton field and a gang of slaves; and those who know what marvellous fertility of invention and facility in discovery mark the age in which we belong, do not doubt that enough of the secrets of the vegetable world and of the resources of machinery will be brought to light to ensure us all we ask. Reasoning, as the philosophers say, *a priori*, the days of the supremacy of Cotton are numbered.

LOUIS NAPOLEON'S REFORMS.

The recent reforms instituted by Louis Napoleon and the manner of their promulgation, are in strict accordance with the character of that remarkable man. Without any premonition, without consultation with his ministers, he astounds both his cabinet and his people with the unexpected publication of a decree, permitting the utmost latitude of discussion of the *Corps Legislatif* relative to the policy of the Government, including criticism of the measures recommended by the Emperor. At the same time Count de Persigny, Minister of the Interior, follows up the decree of the Emperor with an official notification to the Press of the suspension of the law of 1852, under which, in certain cases, that description of property, without trial and without warning, might be annihilated. The French journals are told, in effect, that the same liberty is assured to them that is enjoyed by those of Great Britain. It is probable, however, that this measure is intended only as an experiment, since under any other view of the case, the law of 1852 would have been abrogated, instead of being temporarily suspended. It is further stated that the Emperor has notified his Ministers, that in the event of the defeat by the *Corps Legislatif* of any measure recommended by him, he would immediately dissolve the Chambers, and appeal to the people; and that, should the popular voice be against him, he would submit.

These are remarkable reforms, indicative at once of the wisdom of the French Emperor and of still other changes yet to come, whereby the liberties of his subjects will be enlarged. At the same time, it secures the permanence of the Napoleonic dynasty by identifying it with the extension of popular rights, and thus giving it a place in the undying affections of the French people. The fact is by no means flattering to us as a people that, while the Czar of Russia is enfranchising his Serfs, and while Louis Napoleon is successfully conducting the French Nation along the pathway of Constitutional Freedom, our government is brought to the very verge of dissolution because of its tendencies towards Liberty.

PROPOSED REMEDIES.

Now that South Carolina is, so far as she can go by her own motion, out of the Union, and virtually in an attitude of rebellion against the laws of our country, there are certain duties which devolve upon Congress, in relation to her, which that body ought not to neglect. It seems to us, hereaway, advisable to,

1st. Create a new Judicial District, extending from Washington City on the North, to the Gulf of Mexico on the South, including in its area all the rebellious Cotton States, or as many of them as shall follow South Carolina's treasonable example. It is clearly in the power of Congress to do this thing; and that there is a vital necessity for it, the resignation of the judicial officers in South Carolina and the utter impossibility of serving any judicial process therein, is sufficient proof. In such a district as that which we propose to create, the offenders against the peace and dignity of the United States would be brought with in the reach of the Marshal whom the President might appoint, of the force to act as his posse, of the Judges who would not hesitate to try, and juries which would, if guilty, convict them. In no other way that has yet been devised can the legal machinery of government be brought to bear upon those who are defying its authority. The tribunal would be counter-revolutionary, but in strict accordance with the Constitution and the exigency of the times.

2d. The repeal of the law which makes Charleston a port of entry; to be followed by other acts of repeal applicable to all other ports which shall attempt, by the appointment of collectors and other functionaries, to interfere with the revenue laws of the United States. This and the stationing of a sufficient marine force at the mouth of each harbor no doubt will would be the worst punishment for treason that severity tempered with mercy could invent. The produce of the rebellious districts resting in the hands of the producers, or sold at an enormous sacrifice the merchants, shorn of their business, obtaining goods only at great cost and obliged to sell to customers without money; the banks cut off from their usual sources of profit in the commercial and agricultural districts, would soon be touched in a nerve as sensitive in South Carolina as in Massachusetts, and would learn though late that the breaking up of this government is an experiment all the chances of which the traitors had not properly estimated.

3d. The denial to South Carolina of all the advantages and conveniences of the United States postal system, by decreeing at once the stoppage of every mail at her boundaries on all sides. She has declared that she intends to do this thing upon her own motion at her own convenience. Even now she is defiant of the law by which that system is regulated; her officials do not hesitate to violate mails nor to refuse to deliver matter which *they* regard as incendiary. It will be nothing akin to oppression to do a few days in advance what she proposes to do when fully ready.

We indicate the course by which this rebellion may be overcome without the spilling of a drop of blood by any force which the government may chose to employ, except the officers and such aids as they take are compelled to take life in pure self defence. But it is vain to hope that while Mr. Buchanan holds the helm of State, any thing decisive will be done, unless it be something to aid and comfort the men who are conspiring against the peace of the country and the perpetuity of Republican institutions. He is unquestionably in league with them; and though Congress may be inclined to come up to his support with all the constitutional expedients that patriotism and courage can command, he will continue to the end to be the object of scorn and contempt to all the world—surely by the magnitude of his crime, to win renown that will be denied to the virtues of his most illustrious predecessors. But we look beyond him to the coming man who has the profound conscientiousness, the lofty courage and the true patriotism which will enable him to do and dare anything for the salvation of the country to which he owes so much. We know not what policy he may adopt, or whether we have indicated a measure that he will endorse; but we are assured, and our readers may be, that when power is entrusted to his hands, the effort to preserve this Constitution, this Union and the supremacy of the laws in South Carolina as in Massachusetts, will begin; and that he will not have been a week in the Presidential chair before he will demonstrate to the country that he will be as inflexibly severe with the men who are endeavoring to level the fair fabric that our fathers reared, as Pierce and Buchanan have been with the men suspected of aiding the escape of fugitive slaves—that if all the military may be invoked to drag a negro out of the Court House and the hands of his friends, at Boston, the full energy of the country may be brought into play to preserve that government and that Constitution which have, up to this time, been the wonder and admiration of mankind.

OUR WASHINGTON LETTER.

The Slaveholders' Ultimatum.

[From Our Own Correspondent.]

WASHINGTON, December 22, 1860.

The House Crisis Committee have adjourned to sit again till January 7. No conclusion was reached and no matters in dispute were settled. The Southern members of the Committee have submitted their *ultimatum* to be embodied in the Constitution as amendments. It embraces the following points: First—a declaration that the Constitution recognizes property in slaves. Second—that slaveholders shall be indemnified for the loss of slaves who may escape into the free States. Third—that Congress shall never have the power to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, without the consent of Maryland, Virginia, and the owners of the slaves. Fourth—the right of transit and sojourn *with their slaves* in the free States. Fifth—a line shall be extended across the Territories to the Pacific ocean, north of which slavery shall not be established, and south of which slavery shall be protected, in any Territory *now belonging to or that hereafter may be acquired*. Sixth—no one of the present Slave States shall be allowed to abolish slavery without the consent of ALL the other slave States; insert a provision giving the slave States a veto on all acts of Congress inimical to the institution of slavery. Eighth—that the President shall be elected hereafter by single districts, to the end that the South, being united and the North divided, the latter shall never again be able to elect a President. There are various minor propositions and demands, but the foregoing embrace what the slaveholders deem their ultimatum, and unless they are complied with, they are pledged to withdraw the fifteen slave States from the Union.

All propositions for adjustment made by the slaveholders, require *amendments* to the Constitution. They will no longer live under the Constitution as our fathers made it. It is not pro-slavery enough to suit their ideas. It is not good enough for them. They insist on having a new Constitution formed, that will be in harmony with and support the new dogma that slavery is of divine origin, and is the natural relation between capital and labor. Let all your Union-savers bear this in mind.

Can the free States consider the foregoing demands, and agree that they shall be incorporated into the Constitution? Half-way temporizing concessions will not be accepted. The slaveholders are resolved to have all the questions in dispute settled now, in their favor, or leave the Union. Let us look at the nature of some of these required concessions, and see what grounds they cover. The first demand is that the Constitution shall recognize property in man. The framers of the Constitution were careful to word that instrument to reject that idea. They were determined that no such principle should have a lodgment in its provisions. For seventy years slavery has been adjudged and regarded to be a creation of local law. If a slaveholder voluntarily brought his slave into any free State the moment he crossed the line his power over the freedom of the slave ceased, and the latter stepped forth a free man, never to be returned to bondage without his consent. Grant the slaveholder's present demands and all this ceases to be. The master may then bring his slaves into the free States, and take them back at pleasure, or sell them to some trader, who in turn may take them South when he pleases. Being no longer "persons" in the eye of the Constitution, but having become "property" by the supreme law of the land, the slaveholder will have the same Constitutional right to carry slaves into the free States as horses or cotton. He may keep them there for life. He may buy land and cultivate it with them. If the law or Constitution of the State are attempted to be enforced against him, and his slaves are taken from him, he can sue in the United States Court and recover their full value with costs and damages. After that there could be no more interference under State authority. In short, if the doctrine of property in man shall be inserted in the Constitution, free States will cease to exist. All the States will become slave. The slaveholder will have the constitutional right to take his slaves as property into free States as well as free Territories. But this is not all. The moment the Constitution is amended to recognize property in slaves, the laws against the African Slave Trade will have become null and void, and the accursed traffic will be legal and constitutional; and Congress can pass no law prohibiting the importation of slaves. The most that Congress can do is to make the importers pay a custom house duty on the value of slaves, the same as is now done in respect to live stock or dry goods from foreign countries. In view of such results, is it any wonder that the slaveholders insist with extreme pertinacity that the Constitution should be amended to recognize property in man? And is it not extraordinary—amazing beyond conception—that Representatives and Senators from Northern States can be found who are willing to concede this thing?

The next demand of the slaveholders, and the one on which they seem to be most stubborn and unyielding, is that a line be extended across the Territories to California, guaranteeing all South of it to slavery. Not only all the territory which now belongs to the United States, but that which may hereafter be acquired. Hon. Albert Rust, of Arkansas, a member of the Crisis Committee of thirty-three, has presented to his Committee the following propositions to be embodied in the Constitution as the ultimatum of the Slave States, (and he is sustained by all the other slaveholding members of the Committee except Winter Davis):

"That in all the territory south of the parallel of thirty-six degrees thirty minutes north latitude, involuntary servitude shall never be prohibited, but the citizens of each and every of the States and Territories shall be free to take with them to any of the Territories aforesaid, and hold as property, any slaves now held by them according to the laws of any of the States from which they may emigrate, and that the right of property in slaves in the Territories aforesaid shall never be impaired by any legislation of Congress or of any Territorial Legislature, or by the Legislature that may be formed out of the same. But the right of the slaveholder to go and abide upon any of this Territory be inalienable and perpetual. All or some of the present slave States by abolish the institution by legislative enactment without the assent of the other slave States."

Crittenden's proposition, laid before the Senate Union-saving Committee of thirteen, of which he is a member, embraces the same idea of a geographical partition of the Territories, with slavery established by irrevocable law on all below a certain line of latitude. Adopt this proposition as an amendment, and all Mexico and Central America, before ten years, will be annexed and brought into the Union as slave States, adding at least *forty Senators* and one hundred and twenty Representatives to the slave power in Congress, which would swamp the Free State power. The great struggle between the Free and Slave States is not so much over the present Territories, as for the possession of future acquisitions. The slaveholders are resolved upon possessing themselves of Mexico and Central America, in the Union if they can, and if not, then out of it. It was in view of this fact that Senator Wade told them in his great speech that the moment they seceded the North would instantly establish a protectorate over Mexico and Central America, guaranteeing them against filibustering or invasion by the Slave State Confederacy. It had the effect to cool their ardor and set them to thinking.

It requires two-thirds of each branch of Congress to submit an amendment, and the sanction of three-fourths of all the States to ratify it. Will such assent ever be obtained? Never.

CHICAGO.

FLAX VERSUS COTTON.

Past, Present, and Future.

[BY R. A. CLEMENS.]

While unnumbered products of the earth and ocean are food for man, nature has given us but three substances which human skill makes available for cheap and serviceable clothing. The necessities of polar life and the dictates of fashion and taste make use for silk and furs, but the millions of our race will ever be clad in fabrics of wool, cotton and flax. Of these products, she has in grown on the widest range of soil and climate. The sheep, when reared in hot climates, is no longer a wool bearing animal, and cotton culture is limited to districts in warm latitudes which afford the requisite conditions of soil and climate. But the flax plant, more cosmopolitan in its nature, flourishes from the equator to the outmost limit of field culture, and on the greatest variety of arable soils. The cultivation and manufacture of flax had origin on the banks of the Nile, and thence spread to other countries, with the ancient civilization. In the absence of labor-saving machinery, flax is produced with less labor than cotton, and, for ages, as the cheapest material for cloth it was universally in the ascendancy. It was simple and easy to our own day, but the introduction of power machinery, which banished the hand wheel and loom, and especially the invention of the cotton gin, put flax under an eclipse. For a time, nothing but the intrinsic superiority of its fiber saved it from total abandonment, in the competition of its cheaper rival, cotton. More recently improved machinery for the preparation and manufacture of flax has revived this interest, but sustained by the wonderful inventions of Arkwright, Arkwright and Whitney, cotton still leads unrivaled as the cheapest material for textile fabrics. In this respect, the relative change has been solely effected by the more successful applications of mechanical science to one than to the other of the two staples. And, in view of this fact, and the magnitude and portentous influence of the cotton growing interest, which, with its associated institution, depends upon like relative advantages in those respects, a consideration of the comparative extent to which new labor saving agencies may be applied to the two substances, is well worth our attention.

Upon soils of similar fertility, the average product of flax fiber per acre is somewhat more than that of cotton, but by the usual processes of cleaning the former, the excess in weight is more than lost in the tow resulting from the operation. In the comparative field culture and labor required by the two plants, there is a wide difference. While cotton must be planted in drills, and, during all its slow progress to maturity demands the repeated use of plow and hoe, flax is a broadcast crop, and is raised as cheaply as oats. The labor of picking the seed cotton on an acre is greater than the aggregate required to pull a like number of flax stems, and bind them into small bundles for rotting, and complete all the processes until it is ready for dressing the fiber. A careful estimate of the comparative labor expended upon the two crops, by the usual treatment, shows that up to the point of preparing their staples for market, the cost of flax averages about one-half that of cotton. But following this comparison through the next operations, this relation is reversed. With the cotton gin, one hand and two horses can clean one thousand pounds of cotton in a day, while to dress a like amount of flax, four horses and thirteen men are required, with the use of the best common machinery.

At this point only, in the processes of production, cotton secures the ascendancy, but it here complete and triumphant. While a single cotton gin performs the labor of one hundred hands, the flatel breaker and scutching wheel, in comparison with the old hand-brake and swinging knife, save but two-thirds of the manual labor of dressing flax, and, if the greater waste in tow and the cost of the motive power be taken into account, the absolute saving is no more than one half.

We thus have the economical relations of flax and cotton, as they are, now produced. The comparative excellence of the two materials is sufficiently shown by the universal preference for linen fabrics, when not overruled by regard of expense. But, so long as expense is a paramount consideration, the future of flax, and especially the hope of its speedy adoption as a leading agricultural staple of the Northwest, depends upon a possible reduction in the cost of preparing the fiber for the hands of the manufacturer. Of this there are good grounds for the most confident expectation, in the existence of tested improvements, now ready for general introduction.

Recurring to our comparison,—since the question, as between flax and cotton, is one of economical rivalry,—we think the labor of producing cotton cannot further be materially lessened. The adoption of horse power cotton-seed planters,—implements of cultivation which work two rows instead of one,—gins that will not cut the fiber, and steam power baling presses, is the limit of possible improvements. All these now exist in more or less perfection, but, with their aid, the cost of production will not be materially less, as long as field culture is indispensible, and cotton picking, hopelessly, a manual operation. In respect to flax, we shall indicate a new system of treatment and labor-saving agencies, which am sure to simplify its production and facilitate its manufacture, to an extraordinary degree.

On investigating the nature of cotton and flax fibers, with a view to manufacturing material, we find the former to be integral and undivisable, like the fibers of wool; the microscope showing a collapsed or flattened tube of cork-screw shape, with rough angular edges. These fibers are attached at one end, in close aggregation, to the seed, which in the upland varieties they wholly envelope. In the same kinds and qualities of cotton, the fibers are nearly uniform in length and firmness and the simple operation of detaching them from the seed, prepares them for manufacturing. Flax is more complex in its structure and natural conditions. On breaking a stalk of flax straw, we find it to consist of a hollow woody stem, around which is a tubular sheath composed of bundles of long fibers, or parallel filaments, the whole structure being cemented together by a colored resinous substance or mucilaid compound, and enveloped by a delicate bast membrane. The separating of fibers is decomposed by fermentation, in presence of heat and moisture, and also by alkaline solutions. This allows the filaments to be separated from each other and from the woody portion of the stalk. When the decomposition is permitted to go on beyond the proper stage for preserving the length of these filaments, they readily re-unite into ultimate fibers. These are from one to three inches long, as delicate in the lobster's web, and too fine and frail to be worked by manufacturing machinery. Microscopic examination shows these ultimate fibers either to be smooth and cylindrical in form, and their color is a silvery white. When the residuum of the decomposition of the cementing substance is allowed to dry upon the fiber, a discoloration of different amount is produced.

The economical relations of flax fiber, and reference to the peculiarities of previous power machinery for the manufacture of this material, leads to preference of those methods of preparing the fiber, which best preserves the length of the filaments, as essential to the production of strong, even yarn. Indeed, the advantages and economy of flax for manufacturing purposes, as compared with cotton, in long fine yarns, are so great that the latter material is only used for such purposes when the former cannot be obtained

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